

Remarks to the Chatham County Commissioners
4/15/2019

Thank you for providing us a chance to voice our concerns tonight. My name is Chris Kaman, and I have lived in Chatham County since 1981.

I was born in Charlotte, North Carolina and raised in Memphis, Tennessee. My great grandfather, William Mitchell Morgan, fought for the South as a member of the Mississippi Confederate Army. He was 19 at the time, and never received any pay during the Civil War.

I do not know why this young man fought. Was it out of loyalty to his home and family? Perhaps. Or maybe he thought that the white "race" was superior to the black "race," that slavery of blacks was the natural order of things, and so the South had a right to continue slavery as its economic foundation. Perhaps.

I was raised to believe in the honor of the South, and to revere the Confederate soldiers who died fighting for the South. Yet, my life and my perspectives began to change when I was in the 7th grade in Memphis. I began attending a school that was integrated with about a 40% black. I formed friendships with some of them who in turn began to defend me from others who saw me as a rather defenseless fat, white boy. I was a student at this school when Martin Luther King came to help the sanitation workers struggle for dignity, and he met his tragic end. I continued to change as I had more black friends, and watched the civil rights movement continue into the 1970s and beyond. As I grew older I continued to learn more about the South, the real horrors of slavery, the travesty of the Jim Crow era, and persistent interpersonal, and structural racism.

I recently read a book which is a must read for Southerners who want to come to grips with the actual history of Confederate Monuments. UNC Charlotte Professor of History Karen Cox published a book titled "Dixie's Daughters: The United Daughters of the Confederacy and the Preservation of Confederate Culture." The book shows how United Daughters of the

Confederacy (also known just as the “Daughters”¹) was extremely effective in its efforts to vindicate the South which in fact whitewashed the horrors of slavery; their attempt is part of a narrative called the “Lost Cause”². Between 1900 and 1914 they bought and installed 21 monuments to the Confederacy here in the Piedmont in public spaces, like courthouses and town squares.³ However, in the period between 1868 and 1900 only 6 memorials had been placed in the Piedmont, and 5 of them were placed in cemeteries⁴ by organizations which preceded the Daughters which was founded in 1894. The monument outside of the courthouse is owned by the local Winnie Davis Chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy, and was erected by their efforts in 1907.

The Daughters were also successful in the rewriting of history books (mainly in the South) to change the causes of the civil war from a war to maintain slavery to a war about states rights, and Northern aggression⁵. They sought to portray slaves as happy, and owners as benevolent masters⁶ who took good care of them. Examples of this pro-Confederate historical perspective can also be found the chapter titled “The Negro” in the book “Chatham County 1771-1971” which is available at the Chatham County Library.⁷

The Daughters also promoted essays which spoke of the “civilizing influence” of slavery on those enslaved.⁸ The Daughters embraced the

¹ See “Dixie’s Daughters: The United Daughters of the Confederacy and the Preservation of Confederate Culture” by Prof. Karen Cox, UNC Charlotte, p xii.

² See <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/how-i-learned-about-cult-lost-cause-180968426/> and <https://mountainx.com/news/asheville-archives-the-lost-cause-narrative/>. See also https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lost_Cause_of_the_Confederacy.

³ From “The Rich Man’s Memory That A Poor Man Buys: Analysis of Confederate Monuments and Memorials in the Piedmont Region of North Carolina, 1868-1914” by William Christopher Laws, Masters Thesis at North Carolina Central for a Masters of Arts in 2017, p 66.

⁴ From “The Rich Man’s Memory...”, p 64.

⁵ Dixie’s Daughters, Chapter 7, pp 118-140.

⁶ Dixie’s Daughters, page 104.

⁷ See Chatham County 1771-1971, “The Negro” pp. 319-348.

⁸ Dixie’s Daughters, page 105.

KKK as “chivalrous knights”.⁹ In 1913 the Daughters endorsed the book written by one of its members; it was titled “The Ku Klux Klan or the Invisible Empire.” It praised Confederate General Nathan Bedford Forrest, founder of the KKK, and it praised the efforts of the KKK. The book was included as a supplementary textbook in Mississippi.¹⁰ By the 1920s most Southern states had adopted pro-Confederate textbooks largely from the efforts of the Daughters.¹¹

Despite these very successful efforts of the Daughters, all Southerners today who claim to know the historical truths about the South must admit that the South seceded from the Union to maintain its economy and slavery was the basis of its economy. Most modern historians have concluded such¹². In fact South Carolina, Arkansas, Alabama, Mississippi, Texas and Virginia explicitly stated that in their articles of secession.¹³ President Lincoln in his second inaugural address cited slavery as the cause of the Civil War.¹⁴ This inconvenient truth is something we Southerners today must have the humility to confess, and the courage to redress.

The monument outside of the courthouse no longer reflects the values and attitudes of the majority of Chatham County citizens, if indeed it ever did.¹⁵ The monument is out of touch with our Constitution, particularly 14th amendment which guarantees equal protection under the law. The courthouse should be a venue which embodies the principles of justice and equal treatment of all people, rather than the complete opposite. This contradiction needs to be resolved; the monument should be removed from

⁹ Dixie’s Daughters, page 108.

¹⁰ Dixie’s Daughters, page 110.

¹¹ Dixie’s Daughters, page 160.

¹² See <https://uanews.arizona.edu/story/four-questions-ua-historians-power-monuments>.

¹³ See <https://www.historynet.com/which-states-referred-to-slavery-in-their-cause-of-secession.htm>.

¹⁴ See http://avalon.law.yale.edu/19th_century/lincoln2.asp.

¹⁵ From “The Rich Man’s Memory...”, p 8-22. Chatham County voted 86% against succession in 1861 (p 17) as did the state by 194 votes. In May 1861 a 2nd statewide vote approved succession, but Lee does not mention Chatham’s vote specifically.

our courthouse grounds and returned to the Winnie Davis Chapter in a timely manner.

Many cities and states across the country, including the South, have removed or relocated their Confederate monuments to Civil War cemeteries, and to other more appropriate venues than courthouses and publicly owned spaces¹⁶. I urge you to join with them in making our public spaces a place for all people.

Now I invite Carl Thompson to give us his perspective.

¹⁶ See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Removal_of_Confederate_monuments_and_memorials